

THE STATUS REPORT

MCSW, Charles F. Hurley Bldg., 19 Staniford St., 6th FL, Boston, MA 02114
Web: www.mass.gov/women E-mail: mcsw@state.ma.us Phone: 617-626-6520



Community Unsung Heroines of 2006:

They don't make the news, they make the difference!

Third Annual Unsung Heroines Award Luncheon March 22!

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women appreciates the assistance of so many residents and legislators who helped us identify extraordinary women from across the Commonwealth for consideration as this year's Community Unsung Heroines. Response to our call to action was good and hundreds of nominations were received.

A selection committee now has the unenviable task of reviewing all nominations and recommending the women who will become the Community Unsung Heroines of 2006. Those chosen will be announced in early February and will be invited to attend a reception in their honor at the Massachusetts State House on Friday, March 3, 2006 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm. Honorees will have their photo taken on the Grand Staircase, receive a certificate and enjoy a "Just Desserts" reception.

From these women, a handful of extraordinary Unsung Heroines will be selected to be honored at the MCSW's Third Annual Unsung Heroines Award Luncheon on Wednesday, March 22nd, at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston. All are welcome to join the MCSW at this event. Tickets cost \$75 each and may be purchased online at www.mass.gov/women, or by sending a check, made payable to the MCSW, to the Commission office at 19 Staniford Street, Sixth Floor, Boston, MA 02114.

This luncheon is the Commission's signature event and each year raises funds for a special project that would otherwise be outside the Commission's budget. This year the MCSW will use the proceeds to augment and expand the **MA Women's Resource and Referral Network**, an interactive Web based resource that puts the information that MA women and families need at their fingertips. Thus corporate and business sponsorships are much needed and many opportunities are available. The MCSW is a 509(a)(1) non-profit so ticket costs and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

To reserve your seat at the luncheon, become a corporate sponsor or for more information, contact the MCSW at (617) 626-6520, or visit www.mass.gov/women.

2005 Unsung Heroines

Marie Celestin of Boston

Linda Herman of Hull

Deborah Netto of Falmouth

Lee Nugent of Revere

2004 Unsung Heroines

Isabel Melendez of Lawrence

Gloria Torres of Springfield

West Roxbury Friends of Rosie's Place

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Executive Director Corner

A wonderful and historic event was held January 25 – the first State of Women & Girls in Massachusetts Address at The State House. Organized by The Boston Women's Fund, in coalition with over 30 organizations, including the MCSW, the event offered a powerful message to the over 200 advocates, constituents, policy makers and legislators in attendance. Conspicuously absent were far too many state officials and the news media, highlighting the need to once again request "Remember the Ladies."

The event, patterned after traditional State of the City, State, Union, etc. speeches, was chock full of pertinent facts and figures augmented by gripping personal testimony. Yet the event enjoyed none of the coverage, analysis and commentary that typically accompanies other "State Of...." messages. What does this inattention say, and mean, to the women and girls of Massachusetts?

There are oh so many reasons for people to pay attention – women represent 51% of the state's population. They drive the economy of Massachusetts, both in terms of money earned and decisions made. Women contribute as never before to the public coffers in terms of taxes and fees, yet receive in return a shrinking menu of public goods and services. Yet full equality has not been achieved and too many women are being left behind.

We must use this experience as an impetus to recommit to our individual and collective efforts, better educate our leaders and demand, again and again, that they "Remember the Ladies" until it is no longer necessary.

And speaking of ladies, we received hundreds of nominations for the Unsung Heroines of 2006. Thank you to all who assisted us in this effort – we couldn't have done it without you! March will be a very full month of celebrating their accomplishments so come and join us for what promises to be a phenomenal National Women's History Month!



Hundreds Turn Out to Learn About State of Women and Girls Coalition Holds Event at the Massachusetts State House

Over 30 organizations, including the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, gave the first annual *State of Women & Girls* Address January 25 at The State House. The broad based Coalition was organized by The Boston Women's Fund

The event, which was held at the same time as the Governor's release of his version of the FY 2007 budget, drew over 200 attendees and included an overview of the state of women and girls in Massachusetts. Testimony was given from women and girls specifically impacted by budget cuts, and legislative and policy decisions. Attendees viewed a slide show featuring various Massachusetts statistics and they listened to the coalition's powerful message on the State of Women and Girls in Massachusetts.

Featured speakers included: Marilyn Glater, Chair of The Boston Women's Fund; Representative Ellen Story, House Chair of the Caucus of Women Legislators; Representative Peter Koutoujian, House Chair on the Joint Committee on Public Health; Representative Marie St. Fleur, Vice-Chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means; Linda Brantley, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women; Gail Burton, of Community Works; and Hayat Imam of The Boston Women's Fund. **Continued on Pg. 7**

Commission Corner

Editor's Note: In addition to the MCSW, there are 10 other Women's Commissions in Massachusetts – most are municipally based, while one is county wide. As a new feature of *The Status Report*, we will each month highlight one of our sister Commissions to share their good work and help recruit volunteers to assist them in their initiatives.

Somerville Commission for Women

The Somerville Commission for Women was created in March 1988 by City ordinance. The Commission's purpose is "to act as a centralizing force in the City of Somerville to ensure the equal status of women in educational, economic, political, health, legal, and social spheres including the provision of information, referrals and guidance... [and] to take any action considered appropriate by the SCW to ensure the equal status of women of every race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, national origin, ability, age and sexual orientation." Sonja Darai leads the Commission as its Executive Director.

In 2005, the SCW conducted a citywide survey of Somerville women to identify women's priorities. An ad hoc Steering Committee of experienced leaders helped prioritize four action items for the Commission to develop and work on for the next three years. Now, the Commission is focusing on creating a strong support network for domestic violence service providers and for women in the community. This work includes convening the Somerville Domestic Violence Task Force. The Women's Commission also sponsors a *Teens Against Dating Abuse* program in the public high school.

Executive Director Darai participates on the Mayor's pedestrian/bike Task Force (formed after the tragic death of a Tufts student). Finally, the Women's Commission is developing a program to support and create women's groups based on new studies showing women address and prevent stress by grouping together and talking.

Future plans of the Commission include developing a program in Somerville that would track all women's groups (i.e., gardening, year-long ESL classes, parents' coops, etc), identify gaps where groups are not available (such as economic levels being underserved, or geographic area, age range, ethnicity, or language), and help organizations start new groups. These groups would potentially receive outreach from the Women's Commission on domestic violence awareness and prevention, child or elderly parent/spousal care, and nutrition/health.

On the domestic violence front, the Commission has the goal of making everyone in the city aware of the signs of an un-safe relationship, resources available, and ways to stay connected to prevent isolation for oneself or for friends.

For additional information or to join the Somerville Women's Commission, contact Executive Director Sonia Darai at sdarai@ci.somerville.ma.us, (617) 625-6600 ext. 2406 or City Hall, Annex 50 Evergreen, Somerville, MA 02145

Did you know?

On January 5, 1925 – Nellie Tayloe Ross was inaugurated as the first woman governor in U.S. history (governor of Wyoming).

-National Women's History Project

MCSW Legislative Updates – Newly Endorsed!

S.777, An Act Establishing a Campus Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Advisory

On January 25, 2006, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's board voted to endorse **S.777**, which would establish an advisory council through the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. This council would support campus groups that assist rape and sexual assault victims. A study released in January of this year revealed that almost two thirds of college students are affected in some way by sexual harassment.¹

Currently universities vary greatly on how they handle support for campus victims and their policies toward allegations of sexual misconduct. According to Jane Doe, "this legislation is an attempt to remedy the disparate treatment of victims from one college campus to another in Massachusetts by fostering the development of minimum uniform standards and policies regarding provision of services to victims and the administration of systems of accountability for offenders."² Many victims do not report incidences to police due to the emotional and social stigma that surrounds rape and sexual assault. One concern involves reports that campus officials try to handle rape cases through campus disciplinary standards instead of through the proper authorities, a violation of rights and the law.³ Establishment of an advisory board will establish rules for all higher education institutions to follow thus helping to protect women.

S.1037, An Act Establishing a Sexual Assault and Stalking Protective Orders Act

On January 25, 2006, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's board also voted to endorse **S.1037**, which would replace wording in the General Laws. Currently general law does not allow for a victim to "legally seek a restraining order unless the victim can show a substantial relationship with the respondent. In the case of stranger rape, or even acquaintance rape, clergy, teacher or sexual abuse, a victim cannot seek adequate protection."⁴ Only an arms length restraining order may be obtained for victims of rape by a stranger, clergy, teacher or any others not meeting the relationship requirement, an order which carries no criminal punishment if violated. This new bill will ensure that all victims of sexual assault and stalking are protected and provides for a civil remedy to a dangerous hole in our general laws.

Establishing protective orders in all incidences allows a victim to enter the case into the legal system, building a case against the accused for any future problems or possible prosecution.

1 Zabarenko, Deborah. *Study: Many collegians are sexually harassed*. The Boston Globe. Jan 25, 2006. 2 Jane Doe Inc. Fact Sheet. An Act Establishing a Campus Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Advisory Council. 3 Hanford, Cindy. *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. National Organization for Women. March 2002. 4 Senate No. 1037. retrieved on November 3, 2005 from

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/senate/st01/st01037.htm>

Interesting FACTS

Jan 12, 1932 - Hattie Wyatt Caraway (D-Arkansas) was the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate. She was the first woman to chair a Senate Committee and the first to serve as the Senate's presiding officer.

Jan 3, 1949 - Margaret Chase Smith (R-Maine) was elected to the Senate, where she stayed in office until June 1973. She previously served in the House of Representatives, the first woman to serve in both the House and Senate.

For more information on MCSW's legislative activity, please contact:

Jill Ashton, MCSW Outreach Coordinator E-mail: mcsw@state.ma.us / Phone: 617-626-6520

Paid Sick Leave Legislative ACTION ALERT

Paid Sick Leave Legislation will come before the Legislature's Labor and Workforce Committee for review during the week of Feb. 13. The MCSW has endorsed this legislation on behalf of the women and girls of Massachusetts and it needs your help to move forward.



We urge you to call the members of the Labor and Workforce Committee and/or your legislators today and ask them to support a favorable reporting out of An Act to Establish Paid Sick Leave.

- **Women who have no job-protected paid sick days must choose – leave a sick child home or lose a day's pay or their job**
- **Employers who provide no sick days encourage workers to come to work sick, lowering overall productivity and spreading contagious illness.**
- **Health care costs rise when employees don't take care of themselves and their families, forcing all health-care payers to pay more.**

Members of the Labor and Workforce Committee:

- Sen. Thomas McGee, Chair (Cape and Islands) 617-722-1350
- Sen. Pamela Resor Vice Chair of (First Middlesex) 617-722-1120
- Sen. Patricia Jehlen (Second Middlesex) 617-722-1578
- Sen. Steven Tolman (Berkshire, Hampshire and Franklin) 617-722-1280
- Sen. Edward Augustus (Hampshire and Franklin) 617-722-1485
- Sen. Robert Hedlund (Plymouth and Norfolk) 617-722-1646
- Rep. Michael Rodriguez (Westport) 617-722-2030
- Rep. James Leary (Worcester) 617-722-2030
- Rep. Paul Casey (Stoneham) 617-722-2380
- Rep. Barry Finegold (Andover) 617-722-2263
- Rep. Demetrius Atsalis (Barnstable) 617-722-2080
- Rep. Garrett Bradley (Hingham) 617-722-2396
- Rep. Barbara L'Italien (Andover) 617-722-2080
- Rep. Paul Loscocco (Holliston) 617-722-2220
- Rep. Lewis Evangelidis (Holden) 617-722-2263

A Tribute to Coretta Scott King

The passing this week of Coretta Scott King saddens the MCSW, but we are thankful for her courage and leadership, which illustrates the difference one person can make when they choose to act on something they feel passionately about.

Mrs. King was born on April 27, 1927 in Perry County, Ala. On June 18, 1953 she married the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Marion, Ala. The Kings had many ties to Boston and she remained active here throughout her life. Sadly, on April 4, 1968 Mr. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn. After her husband's assassination, Mrs. King continued her husband's work for social justice and devoted her life to his legacy, establishing the King Center in Atlanta and working for decades for a federal holiday in his honor. Mrs. King became a symbol, in her own right, of her husband's struggle for peace and brotherhood, presiding with a quiet, steady, stoic presence over seminars and conferences on global issues.

She will be missed.

Sexual Assault & Protective Orders Legislative Hearing Alert!

Mark Your Calendar!

On Tuesday, February 7th An Act Relative to Sexual Assault and Stalking Protective Orders will be heard by the Judiciary Committee, exact time and location to be determined. The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women supports this important legislation filled by Sen. Pamela Resor. Please join us at both the hearing and the press conference beforehand at 12:00 in the Senate Reading Room (located on the 3rd floor across from the Senate Chamber).

Stalking is a deadly and serious crime that cuts across race, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, and economic status and is disturbingly common. The prevalence of anxiety, insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression is much higher among stalking victims than the general population.

The Commission on the Status of Women endorsed Senate Bill 1037, An Act Relative to Sexual Assault and Stalking Protective Orders at its January Full Commission meeting. This legislation replaces wording in chapter 265 section 46 of the General Laws with wording that appropriately fills the void when there is stalking, indecent assault and battery and rape with a person that does not have a specified relationship with the victim. Current law states that only an arms length restraining order may be obtained for victims of rape by a stranger, clergy or teacher abuse or any others not meeting the relationship requirement, an order which carries no criminal punishment if violated. This new bill will ensure that all victims of sexual assault and stalking are protected and provides for a civil remedy to a dangerous hole in our general laws.

National Wear Red Day for Women is February 3rd

Go Red for Women is the *American Heart Association's* national call to increase awareness of heart disease and to inspire women to take charge of their heart health. Women who understand their risks of heart disease, and know the steps to prevent it, are better equipped to avert this serious—and mostly preventable—threat to their health. **Go Red for Women** provides the knowledge and tools to empower women to make positive changes in their lives that could help reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke. These campaigns invite women to take charge of their heart health, make it a top priority and live a stronger, longer life.

To help raise awareness of the issue, the American Heart Association is hosting a campaign kick-off reception on February 2nd at 3 p.m. at the Grand Staircase within the Massachusetts State House. This event will kick-off the 2006 **Go Red for Women** campaign and begin the movement needed to increase awareness and save lives. This event will include remarks from special guests including Lt. Governor Healey, Senate President Travaglini, House members, and women survivors.

Please join the American Heart Association in this important effort to save women's lives on February 2nd and **be sure to wear an article of red clothing**. Together let's help the residents in Massachusetts realize their risk for heart disease and stroke and also recognize that there are things they can do to reduce that risk.

For additional information or to RSVP, contact Allyson Perron at the American Heart Association at 508-935-3943 or send an e-mail to allyson.perron@heart.org. You may also visit www.goredforwomen.org.

On February 3 you're free to Go Red in your own fashion. Wear your favorite red clothes or accessory—a red blouse, a red dress pin, red lipstick—carry a fabulous red handbag or sport a red tie and red socks ... and show some heart for heart disease prevention.

Continued from Pg. 2; Coalition Holds Event at State House

State legislators were issued a call to action to sign a pledge to the women of Massachusetts, which outlined concrete steps that will drive public policy toward the shared goal of social, economic, and political equality and empowerment for women.

The pledge asked legislators to commit to:

- Holding COMMUNITY-BASED MEETINGS with their female constituents to build partnerships and dialogues with women and girls of diverse backgrounds.
- Move toward instituting GENDER-IMPACT STUDIES OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION AND BUDGETS by evaluating their effect on women and girls.
- Improve the collection of GENDER- DISAGGREGATED DATA at the State level, through advocacy and budget allocations.

Representative Peter Koutoujian accepted and signed the pledge during his address.

The speaking program was followed by another hour-long information session where ED Brantley and Katie Wheeler, Executive Director of The Girls' Coalition, presented research conducted by their organizations. Brantley presented highlights and statistics from the MCSW Budget Analysis Report *Real Cuts – Real People – Real Pain; The Effects of the Fiscal Crisis on Women & Girls in Massachusetts*. Wheeler introduced the Girls' Coalition report on the State of Girls and Girls' Programming in Greater Boston. Impacts of the decrease in funding, lack of gender specific data, and the critical place for gender specific and gender sensitive programming were discussed. For more information about the MCSW Budget Analysis Report contact the MCSW at (617) 626-6520. For more information about the State of Women and Girls coalition, contact Catherine at the Boston Women's Fund at (617) 725-0035.



To view more pictures of this event, visit our
online photo gallery at:
www.mass.gov/women/SW2006photos.htm

Upcoming Noteworthy Events & Happenings

⇒ **March 2, 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Forum on The Status of Women's Health**

MCSW is a proud sponsor of this daylong conference, which is presented by the Massachusetts Health Council, Inc. To be held at the Boston Marriott Copley Place. Featured speakers include State Senator Susan Fargo and former Lt. Governor of Massachusetts, Evelyn Murphy. For more info visit www.mahealthcouncil.org

⇒ **March 3, 2006: MCSW 2006 Community Unsung Heroine Awards**

To be held at the Massachusetts State House, Boston, MA

⇒ **March 8, 2006, 7:30-9:00 a.m.: International Women's Day**

To be held at Simmons College, Boston, MA

⇒ **March 22, 2006: 3rd Annual MCSW Unsung Heroine Awards Luncheon**

Tickets are now on sale at www.mass.gov/women



For a complete listing of events please visit www.mass.gov/women/upcoming.htm

Commission Officers & Members FY 2006

Kathleen Casavant, Chair, Chelsea

Martha Chadwick, Boston

Gloria Coney, Roxbury

Lianne Cook, Salem

Helen Corbett, Danvers

Donna Finneran, Mattapan

Marianne Fleckner, Westford

Mary Grant, PhD, North Adams

Catherine Greene, Esq., Secretary, Brighton

Elizabeth Houlihan, Vice-Chair, Falmouth

Helen Jackson, MD, W. Roxbury

Judith Kurland, Brookline

Roseanna Means, MD, Wellesley

Angela Menino, Hyde Park

Carol Pimentel, New Bedford

Susana Segat, Cambridge

Greer Tan Swiston, Treasurer, Newton

Kateri Walsh, Springfield

If you have an event that you would like added to our future newsletters, or Web site, please e-mail the information to:
Paula.Daddona@state.ma.us

Commission Staff & Interns

Linda Brantley, Executive Director

Paula Daddona, Program Manager

Jill Ashton, Outreach Coordinator

Darlene Kelter, Administrative Assistant

Interns:

Marianne Bellesorte

Stacie Hargis

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

19 Staniford St., 6th FL

Boston, MA 02114

Phone:

617-626-6520

Fax:

617-626-6530

E-Mail:

mcsw@state.ma.us

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VISIT US AT:

WWW.MASS.GOV/WOMEN

**Do you have questions or comments about this newsletter? If so, please contact
Paula.Daddona@state.ma.us**